THE WATCHERS

A musical by Josh Wellman, with Doug Yetter

Based on "Miss Tempy's Watchers" by Sarah Orne Jewett

Excerpt: Scene Twelve, with the song "Pillow Fight"

SCENE TWELVE

They arrive in the bedroom, setting the lamp on a high dresser, creating grotesque shadows.

SARAH ANN

Ooh. Still a sight chillier up here.

ESSIE

Yep. Well, Tempy looks fine, let's go.

SARAH ANN

No. Wait. Let's look at her, just for… See any of that girl we waded in the creek with?

ESSIE

Haven't seen any of that girl in a long time. And it's a brook.

SARAH ANN

She don't look comfortable. Creek.

ESSIE

I know. Funny how that is. She can't care. But let's…

(Moving pillow.)

…jest see if we can't make her look a little more restful.

(Pause.)

Brook.

They fluff pillows.

YOUNG TEMPY

(Very softly, offstage.)

PILLOW FIGHT.

SARAH ANN

(Laughs.)

Remember those crazy pillow fights she'd always start?

ESSIE

Lands! Ev'ry time her ma let us slumber over.

SARAH ANN

All-out pillow wars, they were, some o'the time.

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(Pause, then realization.)
And right here in this very room!

Pause. Then, impulsively, ESSIE hits SARAH ANN in the head with a pillow. There is a gentle rain of feathers.

SARAH ANN

Why, Essie! What are you…?
(Pause.)
Why…

She laughs, grabs pillow, hits back.

YOUNG TEMPY enters, holding a pillow, and joins in. She sings:

YOUNG TEMPY

PILLOW FIGHT!
WATCH THE LAMP, ESSIE!

YOUNG ESSIE

SARAH ANN!
OOF!

YOUNG TEMPY AND SARAH ANN

WATCH THE LAMP, ESSIE!
FEATHERS IN THE LAMP, NEAR THE FLAME!

YOUNG TEMPY

SHHHHH!
MA'LL HEAR!

CALVIN CROWE,
HAVE YOU MET CALVIN CROWE, THE NEW BOY?

YOUNG SARAH ANN

YES! ESSIE?

YOUNG ESSIE

YES, 'E LOOKED AT ME AND WINKED.

YOUNG TEMPY

PROBABLY HE BLINKED.

ESSIE

NO, HE WINKED.

SARAH ANN

THEN HE WINKED AT ME TOO,
CAUSE HE WINKED WITH BOTH EYES,

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CAUSE HE REALLY BLINKED.

TEMPY

PILLOW FIGHT!

ESSIE

OH, YOU CHEATED!
SHE CHEATED!
PILLOW FIGHT!

SARAH ANN

WHY…
WATCH THE LAMP, TEMPY!

ESSIE

(Joining Sarah Ann.)
WATCH THE LAMP, TEMPY!

TEMPY

OOPS!
FEATHERS IN THE FIRE!
WHOO WHOO WHOO WHOO
BETTER QUIT, DON'T YOU THINK?

TEMPY

CALVIN CROWE SMILED AT ME IN SCHOOL TODAY.

SARAH ANN

CALVIN CROWE PICKED UP MY BOOK.

ESSIE

CALVIN AND ME WADED BAREFOOT IN THE BROOK.

TEMPY AND SARAH ANN

WELL, LAH-DEE-DEE ESSIE DEAR!

TEMPY

OH SHH! MA'LL HEAR!
(On pillow hit:)

TEMPY

PILLOW FIGHT AT MIDNIGHT!

ALL THREE

PILLOW FIGHT!
WATCH THE LIGHT, WATCH THE LIGHT, WATCH THE—

TEMPY

CLOCK! LOOK OUT!
WHEW! BETTER STOP!

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Waltz. They dance in moonlight aging up slightly to young adult women of actual marrying age for 1866.

SARAH ANN
CALVIN CROWE TOLD ME I HAVE LOVELY EYES.

TEMPY
CALVIN CROWE TOLD ME I'M THE PERFECT SIZE FOR A WIFE.

ESSIE
CALVIN CROWE KISSED ME.
CALVIN CROWE KISSED ME AND HE TOLD ME THAT HIS HEART JUST FLIES, WHEN WE'RE TOGETHER.

SARAH ANN
(Beginning over the end of Essie's phrase.)
CALVIN CROWE KISSED YOU?
HAD A LITTLE TRYST, YOU DID. HUH?

ESSIE
NO TRYST.

SARAH ANN
JUST MISSED?

TEMPY
SHHHHH!
PILLOW FIGHT!

ALL THREE
PILLOW FIGHT!

TEMPY
WOULD YOU MARRY HIM?

SARAH ANN AND ESSIE
I MIGHT. *YOU* MIGHT?

TEMPY
I WOULD.

ALL THREE
GOOD.
WE ALL WOULD IF WE COULD.

PILLOW FIGHT!
WATCH THE LIGHT,
WATCH THE HEM OF YOUR NIGHT GOWN.

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ESSIE
TEMPY, TURN THE LIGHT DOWN.
THAT WAY THERE'S NO FIRE.

SARAH ANN
CALVIN CROWE TOOK ME FOR A LONG, LONG WALK.

TEMPY
CALVIN AND ME HAD A PROPER TALK.

ESSIE
CALVIN ASKED ME TO MARRY HIM.

SARAH ANN
(Spoken.)
What did you tell him?

ESSIE
(Spoken.)
Why, I said yes, of course.

TEMPY
(Spoken.)
Well… Congratulations!
(Sings.)
PILLOW FIGHT!

ESSIE
PILLOW FIGHT!
(SARAH ANN does not join in.)

ESSIE
ONE LAST PILLOW FIGHT, BEFORE I'M ALL IN WHITE!
PILLOW FIGHT!

TEMPY
(Overlapping Essie's last "Pillow fight!")
PILLOW FIGHT!

ESSIE
PILLOW FIGHT!

TEMPY
PILLOW FIGHT!

ESSIE
PILLOW FIGHT!

TEMPY
PILLOW FIGHT!

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TEMPY AND ESSIE

PILLOW FIGHT!

TEMPY

(Spoken.)

Sarah Ann, it's okay.

SARAH ANN

I can't believe you said yes! You've ruined it for me an' Tempy! She could'a had anyone!

Essie, you could'a had anyone at all.

ESSIE

Stop bein' silly. Calvin ain't the only man in the world.

SARAH ANN

He was for me.

ESSIE

Well, he didn't ask *you* to marry him, did he?

YOUNG SARAH ANN and YOUNG ESSIE continue to beat each other with pillows.

The young selves leave.

Left alone, the older women have just relived all of that, internally.

SARAH ANN

You caused me so much pain, in this room, Esther Crowe.

TEMPY, unseen by them, gazes out the window at the pear tree.

ESSIE

Oh, don't you… it's been over forty years, Sarah. I haven't done you no harm in decades.

She storms off, headed downstairs… transition as SARAH ANN follows her. TEMPY turns from the window, almost watching them.

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